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The MCAD Art Sale. Image courtesy of MCAD





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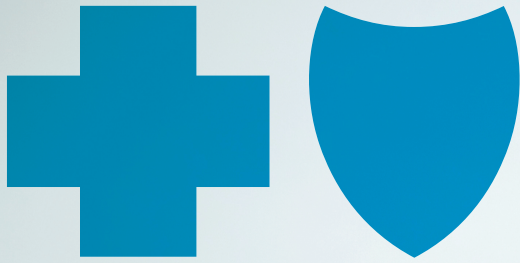
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How to Holiday

Okay, so...how are we going to do this?

We're darting our way through the months allocated toward autumn at a pace hastened by an early debut of snow. Old Man Winter went onstage without an opening act and he just started shredding. And pretty hard for an old guy.

Fall is the season of baggage. Whether it's slung over your shoulder at the airport, or the kind that comes with the impending *holiday* season, autumn has its own set of expectations. For many, these expectations show up in the form of tradition. Expectations bring stress—and a dent in the bank account—to our already crowded lives. 2020 brings a whole new set of stressors to navigate, as we launch into our season of gathering.

Who makes the cut? Who's going to be on the other side of Mt. Turkey when you're sitting at the table on Thanksgiving? Said table will almost certainly seem sparser this year, mostly due to COVID-19, but I'm guessing the election will deliver a few empty chairs of its own. It's that kind of year.

If we play by the CDC guidelines in place

for indoor dining, our gatherings should be half the size they were last year. I'm not sure that'll happen. My sister, the family glue, is already sweating over the abbreviated guest list, haunted by the thought of leaving someone out. But she's a mom, and she's doing what she has to. As cringy as it sounds, we may be doing some Zoom-eating this Thanksgiving.

I'm a solitary person, so I've been able to find a silver lining to this slowed-down version of life. When I lived in California, my family was across the country, so I spent Christmas by myself in my tiny Venice Beach apartment. I was alone but not lonely; I could totally appreciate the me time—and some of the *loudest* silence I'd ever heard. It was different but it was completely ok. I remember the library was closed, but I was on my bike for a lot of the day, and I grabbed a slice from the boardwalk, and I probably watched *Seinfeld*.

I'm not a religious person but holidays are reserved for family. I'm lucky enough to have always had a place to go for a warm meal with familiar faces. Spending a few holidays with a

couple thousand miles between my family and myself ended up being its own adventure. It forced me to see life from a new angle; it had a voyeuristic quality to it. And when I came back, I was lucky enough to have tradition waiting for me—with a spot at the table.

I don't have instructions to dole out or advice to hand down; I'm a listener on this one. Collectively, I believe we can quell the butterfly-effect that comes with a viral pandemic—we can gather *thoughtfully*. Again, cringy stuff, but at the end of the day it's what we're doing to protect the grandmothers of total strangers. I'm OK with that.

It's been here for a while now, but it's still new. Nine months into the pandemic and we're still getting our footing. As we barrel toward a season of stress (even when there isn't an active pandemic) I'm going to remember to take it easy on my fellow man. I'll take things as they come and I'll keep an open mind. If I have to improvise, I will. My expectations are managed; it'll be ok. ■



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The Objects of My Affection

There's a photo of me taken on April, 30, 1945, the day Hitler ended it all in his Berlin bunker. I wouldn't know that fact until much, much later. It was my fourth birthday party; there was cake, ice cream and six little guests at the table. Turned to the camera, I'm wearing a feather headdress and my stuffed, calico rabbit, Timothy, is dangling from my left hand.

This photo couldn't have been taken too long before I took a train trip south with my mother to visit her folks—my grandparents, Mother Mai and Daddy Jim. I no longer remember whether it was on the way down from Connecticut, or on our way back north, that I lost Timothy on the train. I must have kicked up a mighty ruckus; the porters searched through the cars, but Timothy was no more. I was desolate, and I can to this day feel the loss. Not, as an adult, for the toy itself, but for the knowledge I gained then that some things can't be undone; that people and loved things can vanish forever.

I had already forgotten that an earlier friend, a nameless blue elephant, had survived a terrible fate just the year before. On July 6, 1944, I had taken him with me to the Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus. That afternoon, the big tent was torched, crashing down in flames with a loss of 169 circus goers. My dad carried me out, seconds before it collapsed, and by some miracle, the three other adults with us escaped, and dear Mollie Duckett had rescued—and returned—my blue elephant.

Time passed. More grown-up activities intruded; school, friendships, scouts. Most worries I escaped through books. I had a lot of books. Was it in one that I learned children's pretend friends, protectors and confidants, had been taxonomized as “transitional objects?”

English pediatrician Donald Woods Winnicott (1897-1971) coined the phrase, explaining that these objects represented the “intermediate developmental phase between the psychic and external reality,” taking the comfort role

of the mother for a toddler. (Or, adult: think *The Producers* Leo Bloom's recurring hysterics whenever he lost his childhood blue blankie fragment.)

I was well beyond college the day I stopped, transfixed, in front of a children's clothing and toy shop. Standing erect and looking out at me was a plush Polar Bear. In moments, he was mine. Named Cold Comfort, he helped me through a long, difficult patch. He's still here, some 50 years later, as is a larger, unnamed brown ursine, whose size makes a comforting bedmate.

Recent circumstances reinforce my initial childhood suspicion that transitioning from “real-to-me” to “real-to-others” is not all it's cracked up to be. Many nights I sleep more soundly with a plush friend, rather than lie awake, thinking of ... well, *thinking*.

Perhaps regression is the better part of valor. Plush is cheaper than booze, less problematic than humanity, and has a longer shelf life. ■

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This Pope...

I'll start off this article by stating clearly that I am not Catholic. Given that, I try not to pass judgment on other religions and will defer to those who practice that religion to inform me about their institution and doctrine. I was not raised with a connection to any organized religion. I was allowed to figure things out for myself from a spiritual perspective. Christianity, however, was, in a way, ever-present since we participated in Easter egg hunts and had a Christmas tree up in our house every year. In high school, I attended a Pentecostal church for a while but decided that it was not for me. As an adult, I found that Buddhism was what spoke to me the most. I remember when my father began to practice Buddhism, it changed his life for the better. So that has been my spiritual focus since then.

People wondered why a liberal would attend a Catholic law school. I found the University of St. Thomas School of Law's mission to be impactful; it states that it is "dedicated to integrating faith and reason in the search for truth through a focus on morality and social justice." The faith focus there wasn't purely Catholic, and it was up to each individual student to decide what truth there was to discover, determine their own moral compass, and advocate for the social justice concern that lifted their spirit. I, a pro-choice West Coast liberal, received the distinct honor of the "Living the Mission" Award in 2007.

I had always wanted to study abroad and finally got the chance to do so during the summer of 2009. I took some amazing classes like Art & Cultural Heritage Law and Comparative Corporate Scandals: Enron vs. Parmalat. Our classes were in Rome, but we had the opportunity to travel all over the country. One of the group trips was to Assisi, a picturesque town of Italy in the Province of Perugia in the Umbria region, on the western flank of Monte Subasio. I was enthralled to learn that UNESCO had collectively designated the Franciscan structures

of Assisi as a World Heritage Site in 2000. This is where I first learned about Saint Francis of Assisi, who had abandoned a "life of luxury" to live devoted to Christianity after reportedly hearing the voice of God, commanding Francis to rebuild the Christian church and live in poverty.

Who knew that on March 16, 2013, the former Archbishop of Buenos Aires Jorge Mario Bergoglio would take on the name Pope Francis, telling journalists he had chosen the name in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, and had done so due to his concern for the well-being of the poor. The Pope lauded that St. Francis "brought to Christianity an idea of poverty against the luxury, pride, vanity of the civil and ecclesiastical powers of the time. He changed history."

Since then, Pope Francis has maintained traditional views of the Church regarding clerical celibacy, abortion, and the ordination of women. Yet he has initiated discussions regarding deaconesses and has made women full members of dicasteries in the Roman curia. He's been sending mixed messages, however, to the LGBTQ community. In 2013, the Pope famously said, "If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?" Then, in 2019, the Vatican released a document which "calls for public recognition of the right to choose one's gender, and of a plurality of new types of unions, in direct contradiction of the model of marriage as being between one man and one woman, which is portrayed as a vestige of patriarchal societies." This was viewed as a direct attack against the transgender community. Recently, we heard excerpts from a documentary where the Pope encouraged the Church to be more open and welcoming to members of the LGBT community, even arguing for civil unions of same-sex couples, their ability to adopt children, and possibly being against conversion therapy. Wow!

When I think of Catholicism, the Pope, its

churches, and the 1.2 billion people they represent from liberal to conservative parishioners, I envision a giant ship. A ship with 2,000 years of doctrine weighing down its hulls. Seventy-two countries still criminalize adult homosexual intimacy, and at least eleven would apply to the death penalty. Trying to turn such a huge ship in a direction that differs from where it is naturally heading has to be difficult and burdensome. The weight of one's tradition must bend one's soul. The position of the Catholic Church today is not where I'd like it to be, but I'm not Catholic and it's not my church.

When I think about these changes, I think about a queer kid living in a devoutly Catholic home, and I wonder if these incremental moves make their lives any better. Will one less parent kick their kid out of their family home once they've come out of the closet? Will one family choose not to send their child to conversion therapy due to the Pope's words? Will one more congregation welcome a queer kid with open arms because of this significant change in posture—coming from the highest person within their church? Although I hope and want the church to do much more, today, for the sake of those who are not in the privileged autonomous position that I'm in, I am willing to acknowledge and accept this progress when looking at it through the eyes of that child who could benefit from this. In the end I see that progress in the right direction is worth encouraging, and it seems better to praise it and then raise the bar immediately after.

I've heard how some "conversations" within the Vatican can last decades or even a century. It was only in 1962 that Catholic Mass could be heard in local languages, and not only in Latin. That was progress. Hopefully, the full acceptance of gay marriage within the Catholic Church won't take that long. As with all reforms, those discussions are currently still taking place behind Vatican walls. Stay tuned. ■

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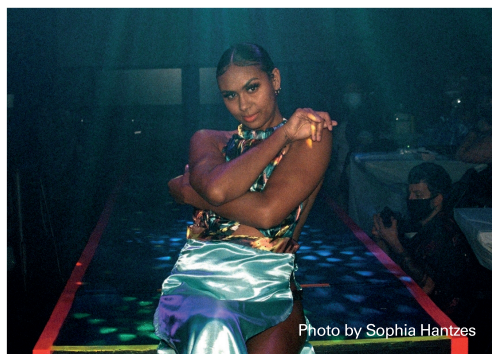


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THE 2020 MCAD ART SALE

More than two decades ago, MCAD started a tradition that puts their student talent in the spotlight—and puts you in a great position to acquire art. For 2020, the sale moves online for the first time.

“In 23 years of the Art Sale we’ve certainly never had a year like 2020, and although at first, we were sad to miss the opportunity to gather together at MCAD, we’re now so excited to bring the incredible, affordable art of our student and alumni artists into people’s homes,” noted Cindy Theis, Vice President of Institutional Advancement. “We hope that the MCAD Art Sale can be a bright spot in what has been a challenging year. We are grateful for the community that continues to support emerging artists. The Art Sale has something for everyone.”

I asked Shelby Pasell, Writer and Communications Specialist at MCAD, a few questions about MCAD’s Art acclaimed art sale:

How long has the art sale been running? How did it begin?

This is the 23rd annual MCAD Art Sale. The sale started as, and still is, a career development opportunity for students and recent alumni: where they can learn to price their work, see what sells, build relationships with buyers, and earn money to support their education and practice. The MCAD Art Sale is the largest community event at MCAD

Who is selling their art?

Current students and alumni who graduated in the last 5 years—so all emerging artists, which means it’s a great career development opportunity for them, but also a great opportunity for community members to buy original, affordable art work, with prices ranging from \$1-\$1500.

A typical year sees an in-person art sale, correct? How will this year be different?

This Art Sale will be very different, fully online (with curbside pick-up) versus a large in-person event. What remains the same is the work, the importance of the sale for students, and an early-access VIP option for those interested in getting a head start.

This must be a big deal for students. Can you speak to that? Is this income for them?



Many students use their art sale profits to fund their education, buy supplies, and continue making art. The sale introduces local patrons to talented emerging artists. Roughly half (48%) of student and alumni participants depend on this as yearly income. 93% were in favor of moving the sale online this year. Allows students to test the market, produce and price sellable work.

Who buys art from MCAD’s art sale? Is this open to the public? How is it accessed?

The MCAD Art Sale is open to all buyers in Minnesota and Wisconsin this year, with convenient curbside pick-up (no shipping). All are welcome to shop, and you can go to mcad.edu/artsale to learn more or to make a donation to student scholarships to receive VIP Early-Access to the sale.

The sale runs November 19-21. ■



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THE 2020 TONY AWARDS GO VIRTUAL

A few months ago we saw one of the first major televised events produced since the COVID pandemic, however completely virtual. The 72nd Primetime Emmy awards, hosted by Jimmy Kimmel, was well received and praised for shifting such a high profile event and making it work.

Now it's time for the theatre community to take center stage. The nominations were announced on October 15, to honor a Broadway season that was cut short due to the pandemic. Currently, Broadway is shut down and has been since March 12—and will most likely be until at least June 2021. However, as theatre people we know, the show always goes on.

So the Tony Awards are taking a page out of the Emmy awards script and choosing to do a virtual ceremony this year. The nominations were just announced a few weeks ago with no set date on the actual ceremony yet. Many expect it to happen sometime in December or January as the Broadway League scrambles to finish the planning of it.

In this unprecedented year we will see a ceremony unlike any we've ever seen. The timing is the first thing that throws this cer-

emony a bit off. In August of this year, the Tony Awards Administration Committee met and ruled that a total of 18 shows were eligible for nominations. Shows that ran from April 26, 2019 through February 19, 2020 could vie for an award. That means both *Girl from the North Country* and *West Side Story* were eliminated from consideration.

I'm just a single person which is why I wanted to ask some others in the community their thoughts on the Tony Nominations and future ceremony. First up was Devon Cox, Associate Producer and Director of Theater Marketing for Artistry Theater. As someone who had seen some of the performances nominated, I asked her if there were any surprises or snubs that she wanted to comment on. Her answer left me in tears from laughing so hard.

"I was at the final performances of *The Inheritance* (if you read Matthew Lopez's *Vogue* piece where he mentions the woman sobbing in the mezzanine at the end of part one – THAT WAS MY MOM!) and it was one of the most powerful theatrical experiences I've ever had. It got plenty of Tony love, and I was glad to see Andrew Burnap (Toby Darling) get a best actor

nod—but disappointed that his on-stage counterpart, Kyle Soller (Eric Glass), was left off.

Soller's deeply vulnerable, understated, sensitive work grounded the seven-hour epic as a whole, and the un-showy, utterly generous way he played the final moments of part one was incredibly important to eliciting such a strong reaction from the audience—including my mother, as now chronicled in the pages of *Vogue* forevermore."

In a year where racial inequality and marginalized groups of people have been thrust into the spotlight, I wondered if the Tony Awards would take note. Some say the Tony's are a little bit more progressive than other award shows in the field of acting (we all remember *Oscars So White*), but overall they all could use some work. Brooklyn based playwright and filmmaker Conlan Carter hopes that the Tony Awards will lead other virtual award shows to focus more on these groups, especially people of color.

"Broadway isn't coined 'the Great White Way' for its marquees alone: an overwhelming majority of actors on Broadway are white (and the numbers are worse for playwrights and di-



one step into Christmas



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rectors). Conversations in smaller, off-Broadway companies are frequent, but real change has yet to be seen in the 2019-2020 Broadway season.

It's remarkable and a good sign that *Slave Play* has garnered a record number of well-deserved nominations, and Jeremy O. Harris' initiatives to make the Broadway production more accessible to [people of color] and lower-income audience members are a great example of what every theater should be doing anyway. Art should be for the people, not just the predominately-white Tony voter."

A particularly interesting and uniquely 2020 situation is the category for Leading Actor in a Musical, which has a nominee of one. That's right, Aaron Tveit is the lone actor in this category for his role in *Moulin Rouge!*. The first question out of everyone's mouth is *does he win by default?* Reese Britts, a Twin Cities based actor thinks so.

"I think that Aaron will still win. I don't necessarily agree with him being the only nominee but I'm happy that the Tony Awards are still happening."

While this is true, according to many Broadway news sources while Tveit is the only nominee in this category, he must still get support of 60% of the ballots cast to win. There is almost more pressure on him to win now being the only nominee in his category.

As mentioned earlier, the Tony Awards have yet to announce a date of the ceremony. Be sure to follow their social media to be the first to know when that date arrives and follow me on Twitter for my live reactions during the ceremony at @BrettDBurger. ■

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Pride Journey: Monterey, California



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For nearly a decade, Monterey has been on my bucket list of United States destinations to visit. The picturesque seaside town always seemed to pop up on my social media feed just when I needed a vacation. I decided this year would be the year I ventured to Monterey. I flew into San Jose airport where I met up with Joey Suarez, a friend and EDM musician who decided to tag along for this journey. It was also Joey's first time visiting Monterey so we had the opportunity to explore the city for the first time together, which was quite a fun experience.

The first thing we did upon arrival was check in to our hotel, the beautiful Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa, located right on the water in the Cannery Row district of Monterey. The district got its name for being home to dozens of sardine canneries and was also the setting of John Steinbeck's novels *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday*. Steinbeck was born in nearby Salinas, and his father served as Monterey County treasurer. The area is adorned with tributes to Steinbeck with statues erected in his honor and buildings bearing his name.

If you have a chance to visit Monterey Plaza, ask for the owner's suite which comes complete with a baby grand piano, dining table for 8 guests, two full bathrooms and three wrap-around porches. Not to mention unobstructed views of Monterey Bay. We did not even need an alarm, as each morning we were awoken (not too early) by the barks of the sea lions that gather along the coastline.

Monterey is home to a ton of sea life. We had the opportunity to take a guided kayak tour of Monterey Bay given by a company called Adven-

tures by the Sea. During our one-hour excursion, we passed dozens of seals, otters, sea lions and other marine animals.

At the time of my visit, California had strict COVID-19 restrictions, so masks were required everywhere, and restaurants were only allowed to offer outdoor dining, but since many have great views of the water, I did not mind dining al fresco. Monterey has a cute downtown with many locally owned shops and restaurants. If you are in the mood for a pre-dinner drink, swing by Montrio Bistro for one of their signature cocktails.

Schooners Coastal Kitchen & Bar is located in the Monterey Plaza Hotel and offers a wonderful selection of fish entrees. When dining by the sea, why not order the specialty? Joey and I began our meal with the "Fresh Catch," which consisted of Morro Bay pacific gold oysters, black tiger prawns and octopus ceviche. I fell in love with the prawns and the homemade cocktail sauce. While Joey decided to go with a panini as his main course, I stuck with fish. One of my favorite dishes is Cioppino. I first tried the dish during a visit to San Francisco many years ago and I order it every time I can find a restaurant that offers it. Each establishment has their own twist on this entrée. Schooners' version of Cioppino contained shrimp, clams, mussels, calamari, and seasonal fish—all in a delicious saffron-Dungeness crab broth.

Walking along Cannery Row is like taking a walk through history. Many of the old buildings still exist, although they are repurposed into hotels and retail establishments. There are dozens of cute boutiques and hidden gems in every nook and cranny. Soap Confections makes hand-

crafted soaps available in a variety of shapes and scents, while Global Candle Gallery creates one-of-a-kind custom candles right in front of your eyes.

Along the way, we stopped at Coniglio Brothers Italian Deli for a delicious charcuterie platter. One thing is for sure, they do not skimp on the meat and cheese. There was so much prosciutto that we had some to bring back to our hotel for an afternoon snack. That being said, we needed a nice bottle of wine to pair with our leftovers, so we stopped by A Taste of Monterey, a wine market and bistro which offers an extensive collection of local wines from Monterey County winemakers.

Since many of the indoor attractions, such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium were still closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, we had a lot of free time to walk around the town and eat...and boy did we eat. The Fish Hopper is a family-owned restaurant founded in 1950, which offers stunning views of the bay and incredible cocktails. Since I was on vacation, I went for the Toasted Coconut Colada, made with Skyy Pineapple vodka, pineapple juice, a splash of Amaretto, and a house special piña colada mix. It was the perfect way to enjoy lunch with great company.

To cap of our culinary journey of Monterey, we visited The Sardine Factory. Do not let the name fool you. The establishment is one of the most incredible fine-dining experiences I have ever had—all underneath a tent. Although customers are not allowed inside the building (except for restroom use), we got a private tour of the property, which includes an elaborate wine cellar fit for king, complete with a custom wooden table large enough to seat 24 guests. The Sardine Factory is known for its extensive wine list, one of the finest in the world, complete with over 2,000 labels and 20,000 bottles. The restaurant offers private wine lockers for their frequent patrons. I will not disclose all of the celebrity names adorning the lockers, but I will say one goes by the nickname, "The Governor".

I was already in heaven and dinner had not even begun. We had the great pleasure of meeting two of the owners, one being the head chef. I told him to bring us whatever he wanted. The rest of my party seemed a bit perplexed by this, but having written many dining reviews in my career, I found this request to be not only fun for me, but also exciting for the chefs as they get to prepare their favorite dishes – some of which I probably would not have ordered on my own.

We began with their famous Abalone Bisque, a smooth bisque prepared with bacon, chives, and Madeira wine. This specialty was served at President Reagan's Inauguration. Talk about historic. The bisque was followed by one of the day's specials, a pan-seared sea scallop over foie gras. I will admit, I am not a big fan of foie gras, but I do love scallops. They paired perfectly together. Next came one of the chef's favorite dishes, Linguini Carbonara, homemade pasta prepared with Parmesan & Romano cheeses, egg, scallions, chives, pancetta, and black pepper. Growing up in New York, I had this dish many times, but this was the best I have ever had...and my favorite dish of the entire trip.

Chef Cutino decided we had not tried enough of his dishes, so he brought us his version of surf and turf which in this case was veal and lobster. To end the evening, he brought us delectable Chocolate Dipped Bonbons served over dry ice—which made for great Instagram photos and videos—in addition to his homemade Chocolate Kahlua Cinnamon gelato, and "The Factory" spumoni. I am still dieting!

It was the perfect way to end a much-needed vacation by the sea. Being by the water always relaxes me, and of course being surrounded by great people and great food never hurts either. ■

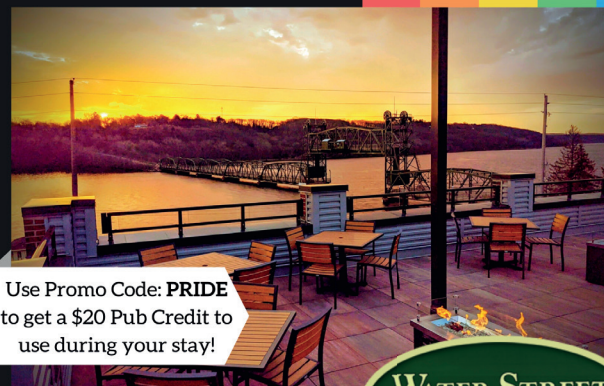
Joey Amato is the founder and publisher of Pride Journeys, an LGBTQ travel website and syndicated column. For more LGBTQ travel ideas, please visit www.pridejourneys.com.

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AT HOME: FLOOR TO CEILING PANDEMIC TIME PROJECTS

By Holly Peterson

Fall has always been a season of preparation and homemaking. Way back when, that meant a season of harvest and food preservation, or maybe migration—but these days it usually just means that it's time to finish a couple outdoor chores and then maybe schedule a tropical vacation to mitigate the impending winter doldrums. This year, though, many of us are looking at a long winter spent mostly – if not exclusively – in our homes.

Considering that we will be spending more time than ever stuck inside, this is a great year to rethink our living spaces. Personally, I just re-organized my entire tiny apartment, but if you are looking for something a little more dramatic than shuffling your furniture around—then planning some remodeling projects is a great way to keep you occupied through the colder months. Of course, remodeling entire rooms is an option, but if you just want a project or two to keep you busy, re-tiling or re-lighting any room of the house makes for a great task.



Continued on page 20

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There are countless tiling projects to keep you and yours busy through fall and into winter. Whether you choose to build a fireplace, modernize a backsplash, or retile a grimy shower, this kind of project can completely revamp your space without taking too much time or effort.

Rubble Tile is a *Lavender* favorite for tiling projects. Not only is it a local, woman-owned business, it also has a 90-plus year legacy. Rubble Tile has spent decades forging strong relationships with manufacturers both near and far, all while perfecting its craft and growing a loyal Minnesotan customer base.

Steve Prodoehl, COO of Rubble Tile, explains, “We foster committed partnerships with our vendors, focusing on manufacturers that are environmentally sustainable and as committed as we are to satisfying our customers.”

Rubble Tile is prepared for any tile-based project you have in mind, whether you are working on something large-scale and corporate or a smaller, in-home endeavor. Similarly, Rubble Tile’s access to a wide range of vendors means that they have an impressive catalogue of materials to choose from. “We offer a wide range of materials,” Prodoehl says, “Ceramic and porcelain, natural stone, glass, metal, and concrete. We carry exclusive lines from



Continued on page 22

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The consumer experience at Rubble Tile is consistently great. “We pride ourselves in our commitment to providing the best possible customer experiences, as we value each individual who chooses us.” Prodoehl says, “We are Proud Allies of our entire Minneapolis community, and believe that everyone deserves beautiful design.”

With so many different projects to choose from and the expert guidance from the staff at Rubble Tile, you are sure to find the right project (or projects!) for you.

LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE

Another way to make a high-impact change in any living space without going for a complete makeover, is by rethinking your lighting options. Make your furniture pop with track lighting, switch those harsh overhead lights to cozy lamps you can curl up by, or maybe just get yourself that chandelier you’ve been dreaming about for the last few years.

Creative Lighting is one of *Lavender’s* favorite lighting retailers. Founded in 1926, Creative Lighting is about as historical as a midwestern business can be. “Now a third generation, family-owned business, the Creative Lighting story is one comprised of dedication and dreams,” Tara Simons, Business Operations and Marketing Director, says. She explains how the business shifted from its utilitarian roots to more chic options over the years, “With a desire to grow with the times, the Minsberg family vision became clear: they would create a new showroom in St. Paul and offer the finest array of decorative, residential-lighting fixtures available.”

Creative Lighting has achieved that vision. “Whatever your lighting project—big or small—we are here to help!” Simons says. And she means it. She quickly rattles off a list of potential projects, including basic fixture selection, lighting layouts, LED systems, and more. With the option to consult with lighting specialists both online or virtually, you are well on your way to crafting a deliberately-lit space with Creative Lighting.

“As we reflect on almost 95 years in business, we are reminded that our core values are the reason for our success and longevity,” Simons says. The quality of Creative Lighting’s work and products obviously contribute to their success, but Simons explains that “by building trust, providing solutions, collaborating and evolving, we have created a loyal customer base.” It is that loyal customer base that Simons credits as the key contributing factor to

Creative Lighting’s longevity.

Creative Lighting is a great local option for your lighting needs, but do not just take my word for it. Take theirs. “We have been a community fixture since 1926. We look forward to the opportunity to Illuminate Life for you and your family.”

If puns like those don’t tell you everything you need to know about working with Creative Lighting, I don’t know what will.

COVID CONCERNS

If you are anything like me, you have a small list of COVID-related questions that you need answered before you contact Rubble Tile or Creative Lightning. Luckily, both businesses have responsible protocols in place regarding the pandemic. Rubble Tile has invited consumers to schedule appointments to their showroom. This way, Poehler explains, the team has a chance “to properly sanitize our workspaces and keep our family of employees and customers as safe as possible.” Rubble Tile has COVID precautions on every level, from showroom, to warehouse, to customer service. Of course, contact-free pickups are also available!

Creative Lighting is utilizing similar protocols and tools. “Custom acrylic shields are



installed in all consultation and transaction areas. We have a limited number of in-store customers allowed during store hours and social distancing signage and protocols have been implemented.” Simons explains, “We have private shopping hours available before and after showroom hours.” Curbside pickup, virtual consultations, and direct shipping are all available. “Your safety and comfort is our priority,” Simons says.

Rethinking our living spaces can be a great way to make sure that not only do we stay busy for the next several months, but also that we create a living space that continues to inspire and comfort us as our social and outdoor activity options become more limited. Whether you look into one of our favorite local businesses or just rearrange your furniture, here’s hoping that we all have a cozy, healthy (and maybe even productive!) fall and winter. ■

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By Kassidy Tarala



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I feel like the coronavirus pandemic has put most of us into one of two categories: There are those of us whose quarantine-induced boredom has led to a new dramatic haircut, maybe some temporary hair dye, or a new piercing. And then there are those of us who have deemed quarantine the ideal time for a drastic life change, from adopting a new pet to remodeling the entire house.

Whether you're rockin' some newly purple'd hair, or you're sitting in a completely torn-up kitchen, wondering at what point the remodel went from buying some new plants to redoing your flooring—the pandemic has offered a fresh start in many ways. So whatever it is that

quarantine has given you the gall to try, go for it! And if it's something as life-altering as a home remodel, Siwek Lumber can help with that.

During the Great Depression in 1933, Joseph and Frances Siwek began what is now Siwek Lumber & Millwork, Inc. Though unemployment was at an all-time high, the couple decided to take a gamble and start a new business.

Siwek Lumber is a retail lumberyard, millwork center, custom shop, and a hardware store that serves everyone—including homeowners, craftspeople, artists, woodworkers, manufacturers, business owners, hobbyists, crafters, and the DIY crowd.

"Our custom millwork shop recreates old wood storms, screens, sash, mouldings, and doors," says Siwek Lumber owner Tom Siwek. "Our winter projects include furniture making, interior remodeling, interior doors and trim, planning for outdoor projects and summer projects, and more."

Siwek says folks often think that working outside isn't possible in cold months, but he wants customers to know that there are many working days through the winter.

"Winter is a great time to work in the garage or basement shop on hobby projects you've put off for years! Woodworking is something anyone can do and succeed at," Siwek says. "Desks, tables, bedframes, dressers, and more. The biggest tip I have is to make sure it fits up the basement stairs after building!"

To accommodate customers while still taking necessary COVID-19



precautions, Siwek Lumber has installed social distancing counters that are six feet deep, and they've also widened the main aisles in the outdoor sheds and warehouses for easy navigation and social distancing. There are also sanitization and cleaning procedures in place to ensure the space is clean for customers.

"We are an amazing asset with a huge variety of building materials with expert help and ease of shopping," Siwek adds.

If a hair cut isn't enough change for you these days, maybe a new statement piece of furniture will do the trick. It's worth a shot!

For more information about Siwek Lumber, visit siweklumber.com. ■



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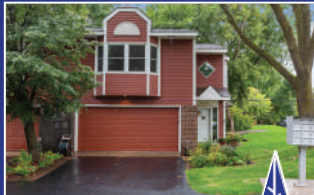
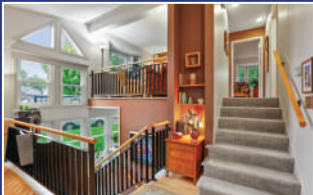
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If You're a Ma'am, You're Fam

Since January 2020, Ma'am has been offering a safe, welcoming community for lesbians forty and older.

If there's one thing that's detrimentally been missing from most of our lives these days, it's community. Sure, we have Zoom, FaceTime, and all of the other video-calling platforms, even fun new activities like virtual yoga or online book clubs. But there's the sense of community, the human connection, that isn't quite as strong as many of us would like.

I'm an introvert, so initially I was all over this quarantine shindig. But that was in March. It's now November, and I'll be honest, I miss people. I've seen one or two friends at a time here and there, I've visited family in the area, and I've participated in several Black Lives Matter protests around the Twin Cities, so I'm still interacting with people. But it's different. We're all in masks. There's a tangible uncertainty in the air when people move within six feet of each other. We have to get tested before and after. It's just... weird.

I'm lucky because I have a wonderful partner and dog at home, so it's always quite lively. And I have several jobs and volunteer with Communities United Against Police Brutality



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Continued on page 30

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SENIOR LIVING BY KASSIDY TARALA



Photo courtesy of Storyblocks.com

and the encampments of unhoused folks around the cities. So I've been able to distract myself pretty well. But I'm desperate for the personal connections that I took for granted before I was shut away to my tiny apartment. I miss restaurants, bars, movie theaters, coffee shops, and all of that. But what makes me miss all of those things and more is community.

If you've recently moved, started a new job, or are just in a new phase of your life, the pandemic has surely presented even greater challenges. But it's important to remember that we really are in this together, and even though things are weird and community feels a lot different than before, it's still there.

Ma'am is a community for lesbians who are forty years and older, and though the organization just started in January 2020 (just in time for COVID-19 to shut everything down...), it's been an appreciated community for many.

"As co-founders, we had been long-time friends of 30-plus years and decided we wanted to create Ma'am so lesbian women had a social gathering, where women could look forward to a night of networking, making new friends, maybe even finding a date, but most importantly feel a sense community," says Ma'am co-founder Beth Mejia.

Mejia, who founded Ma'am with Kate McFarland, says Ma'am is a traveling event and changes venues on a monthly basis, with the goal of providing a fun, safe, and respectful gathering space for lesbians who are 40 and older. Though the group is specifically for lesbians, Mejia emphasizes that Ma'am is inclusive and welcoming to everybody.

"We work with whoever is hosting our event to make sure they truly support the community," Mejia says.

So if you, like me, have been missing a sense of community these days, if you've been feeling a bit trapped and like you need to talk to other adults who aren't your partner or dog, Ma'am is ready to welcome you with open arms.

For more information about Ma'am, visit facebook.com/Maam-100519964780614/ or email clubmaam2020@gmail.com. ■

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MN ADOPT

The 'gateway to adoption and foster care in Minnesota' celebrates 40 years

November is National Adoption Month, a time to celebrate the families that have formed through adoption, and to draw awareness to the foster children still waiting right here in Minnesota.

MN ADOPT is at the forefront of adoption services in the State, and in 2020, the organization celebrates its 40th anniversary. Rachel Walstad is their Executive Director.

"Since 1980, MN ADOPT has been focused on the primary goal of ensuring that every Minnesota child grows up in a safe and nurturing family," Walstad told *Lavender*.

According to Walstad, matching children to loving parents takes the work of many entities. "MN ADOPT is not a child-placing agency, but instead supports and enhances the work being done by counties, tribes and private child placing agencies throughout Minnesota."

"We see ourselves as sort of 'bookends' to the adoption study and placement process," Walstad continued. "We provide information and referrals needed on the front end to connect families to the resources needed to become adoptive or foster parents, and we support families who have children in their care through educational and support services designed to meet the unique needs of their family."

With the exception of educational classes, MN ADOPT provides its services at no charge.

Each year, MN ADOPT connects more than 5,000 families considering adoption and foster care to organizations that are able to assist them in their journey. And through collaborative efforts, the agencies helped Minnesotans adopt 1,221 children in the foster care system in 2019.

THE NEED FOR FAMILIES

On any given day, more than 9,000 Minnesota children are in foster care.

"While many are able to return to their families, there are currently over 700 Minnesota children in immediate need of an adoptive family," Walstad said.



Since 1980, the staff at MN ADOPT have ensured that every Minnesota child grows up in a safe and nurturing family.



Circus of the Heart

Currently, 733 children in Minnesota have that immediate need. Of those children, a considerable 46% are 12 to 18 years old, the most of any age group. Fifty-seven percent are siblings who need to be adopted together. And 65% of the children waiting have special needs, including physical, mental, emotional or behavioral disabilities.

Of the 733 children waiting, 36% are White, 31% are Black, 25% are two or more races, 6% are American Indian, and 1% are Asian/Pacific Islander.

MN ADOPT works with media across the State to feature specific children waiting for families. Said Walstad, "One of these features is Kid Connection on Twin Cities Live, which is the successor to KSTP's Thursday's Child feature, which began as one of MN ADOPT's first awareness raising features in the 1980s."

Through Kid Connection, nearly 50% of children featured have joined an adoptive family.

The agency also has relationships with newspapers from Duluth to Minneapolis. *Lavender* is proud to support MN ADOPT.

ADDING TO YOUR FAMILY: THE COSTS AND TIMELINE

MN ADOPT's State Adoption Exchange (www.mnadopt.org/waiting-kids), allows those wanting to adopt the opportunity to learn about the children who need families.

Plenty of resources await. "MN ADOPT provides low or no cost adoption and foster care related workshops for families and professionals

Community Connection brings visibility to local LGBTQ-friendly non-profit organizations. To reserve your listing in Community Connection, call 612-436-4698 or email advertising@lavendermagazine.com.

ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE MN ADOPT

Finding families and providing information, education, and support to Minnesota Adoptive, Foster and Kinship communities. 2446 University Ave. W., Ste. 104 St. Paul, MN 55114 (612) 861-7115, (866) 303-6276 info@mnadopt.org www.mnadopt.org

ANIMAL RESCUE

Second Chance Animal Rescue

Dedicated to rescuing, fostering, caring for, and adopting out dogs and cats into forever homes. P.O. Box 10533 White Bear Lake, MN 55110 (651) 771-5662 www.secondchancerescue.org

BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS Quorum

Your GLBTA chamber of commerce working to invigorate, build & partner for a diverse business community. 310 E. 38th St., Ste 209 Minneapolis, MN 55409 (612) 460-8153 www.twincitiesquorum.com

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DISABILITY RESOURCES

Disability Hub MN

Free statewide resource to help solve problems, navigate the system and plan for your future. 1-866-333-2466 www.disabilityhubmn.org

EVENT VENUES

Landmark Center

A classic venue, with a grand cortile and beautiful courtrooms, accommodates celebrations of all sizes. 75 W. 5th St. St. Paul, MN 55102 (651) 292-3228 www.landmarkcenter.org

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Alzheimer's Association

Providing free care consultations, community education programs, a 24/7 helpline and support groups throughout Minnesota. 7900 W. 78th St., Ste. 100 Edina, MN 55439 Helpline 800-272-3900 alz.org/mnnd

One Heartland

Camp True Colors for LGBTQ+ youth and Camp Heartland for youth impacted by HIV/AIDS. 26001 Heinz Rd. Willow River, MN 55795 (888) 545-6658 www.oneheartland.org

The Aliveness Project

Community Center for individuals living with HIV/AIDS – on-site meals, food shelf, and supportive services. 3808 Nicollet Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55409 (612) 824-LIFE (5433) www.aliveness.org

Family Tree Clinic

We're a sliding fee clinic that also accepts insurance & assistance programs. Be healthy. Be you! 1619 Dayton Ave. St. Paul, MN 55104 (651) 645-0478 www.familytreeclinic.org

JustUs Health

LGBTQ-friendly counseling and referral; HIV prevention and support; public education, research and advocacy. #HelpHelps 2577 Territorial Road W. Saint Paul, MN 55114 (800) 243-7321 Minnesota AIDSLINE (612) 341-2060 General info www.JustUsHealth.org

NAMI Minnesota

(National Alliance on Mental Illness) Providing free classes and peer support groups for people affected by mental illnesses. 800 Transfer Rd. #31 St. Paul, MN 55114 (651) 645-2948 www.namihelps.org

Pride Institute

Provides residential and outpatient treatment services for substance use disorder and addiction exclusively to the LGBTQ+ community. 14400 Martin Dr. Eden Prairie, Minnesota 55344 2101 Hennepin Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55405 (888) 616-5031 www.pride-institute.com

MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

Radio K - Real College Radio

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Cowles Center for Dance and Performing Arts

The Cowles Center is a catalyst for the creation, performance, education, and celebration of dance. 528 Hennepin Ave. Minneapolis, MN www.thecowlescenter.org

RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL

Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church

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Plymouth Congregational Church

Many Hearts, One Song; Many Hands, One Church. Find us on Facebook and Twitter. 1900 Nicollet Ave. Minneapolis, MN 55403 (612) 871-7400 www.plymouth.org

Westminster Presbyterian Church

An open and affirming congregation, welcoming persons of all sexual orientations, gender expressions and identities. 1200 Marquette Ave. Minneapolis, MN 55403 (612) 332-3421 www.westminstermpls.org

SENIOR SERVICES

Senior Community Services

Provides caregiver support, resource counseling for seniors, home chores for seniors, and Medicare support. 10201 Wayzata Blvd., #335 Minnetonka, MN 55305 (952) 541-1019 www.seniorcommunity.org

SPORTS & RECREATION

Minnesota State Parks & Trails

There are 75 Minnesota state parks and recreation areas ready for you to explore! (888) 646-6367 www.mndnr.gov/parks

Stonewall Sports – Minneapolis

LGBTQ+ community-based sports organization with new dodgeball, kickball and tennis seasons starting throughout the year. Visit our website to subscribe and receive season registration updates. www.stonewallminneapolis.org

TRAVEL

Destination Northeast

A hyperlocal tool connecting visitors to some of the best parts of Northeast Minneapolis. 2329 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis, MN info@destination-ne.us www.destination-ne.us

Discover Stillwater

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Discover St. Louis Park

Close to Minneapolis, far from ordinary. Exceptional dining, attractions, shopping, hotels and event space. 1660 Hwy 100 S., Suite 501 St. Louis Park, MN 55416 (952) 426-4047 www.DiscoverStLouisPark.com

VOLUNTEERISM

Gay 4 Good

LGBTQ organization making positive impact on our greater community. Volunteering for social & environmental causes. (562) 684-8210 www.gayforgood.org

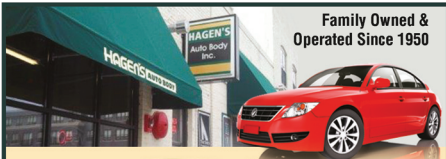
YOUTH

The Bridge For Youth

Emergency shelter, crisis intervention, and other resources for runaway and homeless youth. 1111 W. 22nd St. Minneapolis, MN (612) 377-8800 www.bridgeforyouth.org

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Tom Ewald and Joe Thom of Golden Valley started the adoption process in 2014. Their son, Jonathon, is now 16

in all stages of the process,” Walstad said. “Topics are focused on the parenting needs of adoptive, foster and kinship caregivers, including attachment, trauma, and identity.”

MN ADOPT welcomes LGBTQ families who would like to become adoptive and foster parents. “There are several private and public agencies that have completed or are in the process of completing the All Children, All Families accreditation through the Human Rights Campaign,” Walstad said. “MN ADOPT completed the first Building Foundation for Inclusion benchmark this past spring and will continue to work through the remaining benchmark levels during this accreditation cycle and next year’s cycle.”

So how much does adoption cost? When you do an online search for ‘Why is adoption so expensive’, Google provides 145 million results. But it’s a perception that Walstad said isn’t always the case.

“While it is true that private adoption can be expensive, those who adopt a child from foster care in Minnesota can do so without paying any fees, provided they work through an agency contracted specifically with the Minnesota Department of Human Services for this purpose.”

Children adopted from foster care receive medical assistance to help cover medical and therapeutic expenses. Depending on their care needs, a monthly stipend, called adoption assistance, is also provided.

As for the length of the adoption process, it can vary. Walstad noted that variables include which adoption agency you work with, your speed in completing paperwork, your ability to

meet with your adoption worker during business hours, and more. “Those looking to adopt who are open to sibling groups, older children and children with higher needs may experience a shorter wait,” Walstad said.

FOUR DECADES OF SUCCESS

Tom Ewald and Joe Thom of Golden Valley started their adoption process on MN ADOPT’s State Adoption Exchange in 2014. Their son, Jonathon, is now 16 years old.

“The most rewarding part of being a father is watching how kids develop socially and emotionally and having a part in that, which is a big responsibility for any parent,” Thom said.

Adoption came with its unknowns, too. Ewald reflected on the most challenging part of the adoption process.

“It was preparing for the needs of a child that you haven’t met. There are universals in parenting and in trauma, but each kid is an individual and so learning how to be a good parent for them is difficult in advance. That’s where MN ADOPT is helpful. They provide post-adoption resources to help you best become a family and to become the best parents you can be.”

HOW COVID-19 IMPACTED THIS IMPORTANT WORK

“This has definitely been a unique year, and the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted our focus and energy in so many ways,” Walstad mentioned.

The agency made adjustments to make sure their services best met the needs of families



Rachel Walstad is the Executive Director of MN ADOPT, an agency primarily funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services

and that staff had the resources necessary to work remotely.

“Because we are primarily funded through the Department of Human Services, we have thus far not suffered a large financial impact due to COVID-19,” Walstad said. “One area where we have seen a negative impact is through individual contributions, which is understandable given the job insecurity experienced by so many in our community right now.”

MN ADOPT’s annual celebration, Circus of the Heart, changed from a one-day event attracting 1,000 people, to a three week virtual celebration in November. You can go to www.mnadopt.org to learn how you can participate.

SUPPORTING ALL FAMILIES

It takes the entire community to support MN ADOPT, and in particular, the families who are looking to adopt.

“A strong support system is really important for those who adopt from foster care,” Walstad said. “This support can take many forms, from providing meals, helping with rides to appointments, helping with childcare so parents can have a break, educating yourself about adoption-related topics, and just listening and being a source of emotional support.”

Whether you are on the journey to adopt, or know someone looking to adopt, your support is necessary to help strengthen our community.

To ask questions about adoption and foster care programs in Minnesota, connect with MN ADOPT by emailing info@mnadopt.org or call (612) 861-7115. Their website is www.mnadopt.org. ■

Mike Marcotte’s Serve Our Society series highlights nonprofit organizations impacting the LGBTQ community. To nominate a community group for a future article, email him at mike@givemethemike.com.

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